

NSC BRIEFING

10 JANUARY 1957

ISRAEL AND ITS NEIGHBORS

- I. Israeli troops have withdrawn from El Arish--last town in Egyptian territory west of the Israeli frontier. Other Israeli forces now remain at points controlling Tiran Strait, at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba.
- A. These are the positions which Israel agreed to retreat to-- and then talk some more.
- B. Israel's problem: shall its withdrawal go farther, in trust that the UN and the great powers will grant Israel the security guarantees it wants? Or shall Israeli forces stay put, using these footholds in Sinai as positions of strength from which to bargain?
- II. Israelis are seeking three specific objectives:
- A. Creation of a "buffer zone," demilitarized and perhaps patrolled by UN troops, between the present Israeli frontier and any military positions the Egyptians may once more take up in Sinai.
- B. A guarantee that Egypt will not again bar the Gulf of Aqaba or the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping.
- C. An assurance, which they have indicated they are ready to enforce themselves, if necessary, that the Gaza Strip will not be returned to Egyptian control.
- III. Freedom of the Gulf of Aqaba seems to come first in Israeli thinking at the moment.
- A. Tel Aviv has announced that Eilat (Israeli port at the head of the gulf) is to become a "naval base".

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

IV. The Arabs, of course, are determined to force the Israelis all the way back to the 1949 armistice lines. The danger is that the pressure the Arabs are now using or may use to achieve this objective affect the West more directly than they do Israel.

A. 6 January broadcast from Cairo radio quoted Nasr as saying no British or French vessels would be allowed to use the Suez Canal until Gaza is returned to Egyptian control.

1. Failing Israeli compliance, Nasr could hold up clearance work at Suez: the Egyptian ambassador in Damascus has said this would happen.

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D. Eden's resignation, as seen by Nasr, will be another Egyptian "victory".

E. Syrian authorities have reiterated that repair of the sabotaged pipeline from Iraq to the Mediterranean depends on complete Israeli withdrawal to the '49 lines.

1. The new, more leftist cabinet in Syria may also be tempted to try to use this pressure to gain wider concessions from the West in the overall negotiation of Arab-Israeli issues.

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